

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

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RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION IN EUROPE

The subject of reconstruction in Europe (and the assistance which Britain may be able to give) is being given much thought both in official circles and among the Churches and voluntary organisations.

The following statement, recently issued by the Foreign Office, indicates what is on foot in the matter of general relief and reconstruction.

"The help of civilian volunteers, furnished by British voluntary organisations, will be needed by the authorities concerned for relief work in the liberated territories of Europe. The exact stage at which this will be possible is under consideration with those authorities. Meanwhile, in view of the many inquiries which have been received, attention is drawn to the arrangements made to meet this contingency by the principal British societies traditionally and internationally associated with overseas relief. These, with official encouragement, have formed the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad; and with the council is associated a standing conference on which other societies concerned with relief work are represented.

"The officers of the council are: Chairman, Sir William Goode (Government Director of Relief after the last war); deputy chairman, Lady Falmouth (British Red Cross Society); hon. treasurer, Martin D. V. Holt; secretary, W. D. Hogarth.

"The council is now completing a register both of teams and individuals available for relief work abroad through the resources of its constituent societies. British subjects who already belong to one of the 42 societies which constitute the council and conference and who wish to volunteer should register through their own organisations. Those who

are not members of any of those societies should apply for a registration form to the Secretary of the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad, Hope House, 45, Great Peter Street, S.W.1."

Churches' Plan for Reconstruction

In addition to the work of material relief there is, of course, the specific task of the rehabilitation of Christian institutions in Europe. With this problem especially in mind the British Churches have formed a strong committee under the chairmanship of the Rev. M. E. Aubrey, C. H., Secretary of the Baptist Union.

This Committee feels strongly that any help subsequently to be given to the European Churches must be the kind of help which they desire and not merely that which British or Americans desire to give. There is a strong feeling also that the giving will not be entirely a one-sided matter. While those Churches which have not suffered persecution or oppression may have much to give on the material plane, it is felt that the Churches which have suffered acutely will have a big contribution to make in the realm of spiritual experience.

BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The Publicity Department of the British Council of Churches issues the following report of its recent meeting.

"The Archbishop of Canterbury presided over a large attendance at the third meeting of the British Council of Churches held in London from September 28th to October 1st. Those present included the Bishops of Bristol, Hereford, Lichfield, Sheffield, and

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Worcester, the Very Rev. J. Hutchison Cockburn, Dr. Scott Lidgett, Viscount Hambleton, Lord Rochester, the secretaries and other leaders of the Baptist, Congregational, and Methodist Churches.

"The Council welcomed the Pasteur André Boegner (French Reformed Church in North Africa) and the Rev. Dr. Henry S. Leiper and the Rev. Theodore C. Hume from the United States, as well as its General Secretary, the Rev. Dr. A. C. Craig, who has lately returned from a visit to the Federal Council of the Churches in America.

"Encouraging reports were received of the action which has been taken by the Departments of the Council in regard to Home and Family Life in war and post-war conditions, to Rural Reconstruction, to the help which may be given by British Churches to the reconstruction of Church life and work in Europe, and to the large number of 'Religion and Life' Weeks in which it has taken part and is planning in all parts of the country. It also gave special attention to the service of Youth and the Training of Youth Leaders, and while welcoming especially the importance attached to religion by the Board of Education in its White Paper on 'Educational Reconstruction,' it regretted that no mention was made there to religious teaching in the proposed Young People's Colleges."

Among the most interesting of the "Religion and Life" Weeks reported was one held for an Army Brigade, with the full support of the Brigadier. It has been followed up by a residential week-end conference at which officers and men lived, played, discussed and prayed together, the team of leaders being supplied from the office of the British Council of Churches. At this gathering a "Christian Soldiers' Order" was inaugurated for the Brigade.

The following resolution passed by the Council is an indication of the interest which British Churches are taking in rural reconstruction.

"The British Council of Churches is deeply concerned that agriculture and its land-working population shall not for a second time in this generation fall on evil times through uncertainty and instability in public policy. In view of the fact that basic questions affecting the ownership and the use of the land, the preservation of the countryside, the provision of housing and household amenities and social security for the rural population, and the development of agricultural education have all been examined and reported upon by Government Committees

within the past year, the Council presses upon the Government the necessity for early and adequate action on these matters."

VIGOROUS LIFE IN THE DUTCH CHURCH

There is much evidence that the Dutch Church, in spite of all its difficulties, continues to show signs of vigorous life and of spiritual resistance to the New Order. Thus a recent writer in a Dutch Nazi paper attacks the Church in the following words:—

"Nowhere is a more virulent hatred preached by people who call themselves Christians, than from the pulpit. Without generalising, it can be said that an embarrassing number of these shepherds are examples of this kind of conduct. They comb the Gospel for texts, which, after the necessary mutilation, are used as a parallel for the present times. Instead of making an attempt to liberate these people who are consumed by this silly hatred, which will have disastrous consequences for the Church, the nation and the national future, this fatal fire of hatred is always fanned anew."

The paper adds: "Why is this book (a plea for co-operation with the Nazis.—ED.) practically unobtainable in the bookshops? The answer we get is that there is a paper shortage. Agreed. But there are masses of unimportant little periodicals—the bookstalls at the station are full of them—for which paper is required, which could be used a thousand times better for a cheap popular edition of this booklet."

We are able to print the following interesting report of the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church which took place in July:—

"The Synod expressed its sympathy with all those who were compelled to carry a very heavy cross as a result of the war and the occupation.

"The Synod mentioned particularly all those thousands of men who had been torn from their family, those who were exposed to conflicts of conscience, prisoners, young people who had been taken away from their environment and the special perseverance needed for theological students who had been prevented from continuing their studies. The Synod prayed that God would grant all of them faithfulness and the necessary strength in all difficulties, and that He would keep them from evil."

The Dutch, in spite of temporary separation from the East Indies, retain their interest in Missions. During the Synod a report of the Committee on Foreign Missions was

considered, in which the following four resolutions were proposed:

1. That the Dutch Reformed Church should be financially responsible for the mission work which up to the present had been undertaken by the Associated Societies and the Reformed Union of Missions. The Church would take the entire responsibility, while leaving the care and direction of the Missions to those organizations which up to the present had been concerned with Foreign Missions.

2. That the Dutch Reformed Church should give missionaries the same rights in the ministry of the Word and the sacraments as were given to its ministers in Holland.

3. That the studies of the missionaries should be the same as the University studies for the examination of candidate of theology, but that these studies should be completed by a Mission course in a special Mission School. These studies together would be considered as equivalent to the instructions for preachers in the Church of Holland.

4. That the Dutch Reformed Church should do everything possible to establish mission work on a solid financial basis.

The Synod accepted the first and the last proposals, and appointed a Committee to examine and report on the two other points.

The following account of the Whitsun Festival in the Dutch Church (although a little out of date) throws a vivid light on the thoughts which are uppermost in the Christian Church of the occupied countries.

"It cannot be said that the Feast of Pentecost this year was a joyful one, especially considering the circumstances in which we were obliged to celebrate it. I believe that in a great number of families there was more sorrow than joy, because of the conditions of life to which thousands of families had been reduced by the war. But let us not forget that all this must not be a pretext for pessimism and unrelieved sadness amongst the people of God.

"On the first day of Pentecost in Jerusalem there were no roses under foot; too often we forget this fact. The Disciples lived in difficult conditions; they also lived in an occupied country. On the occasion of the feast of Easter we meet the Roman Governor in Jerusalem. The New Testament was begun in an occupied country. How often do we forget that? Preachers, as well as their hearers, would do well to think of it a little more frequently; then one would approach matters from another point of view, and the real situation would be seen in another light. For instance, the Sermon on the Mount

would become clearer and its significance more 'up to date.' We should no longer forget that before Pentecost the Disciples lived in Jerusalem, full of anxiety. On Easter eve they shut themselves behind locked doors for fear of the hate and hostility of the Jews."

CHURCHES AND ISOLATIONISM

We referred last week to the crusade of the American Methodist Church in support of co-operation with other nations after the war in the maintenance of international order.

The following leading article, which we quote from *The Daily Sketch* (September 25th), indicates the interest which this and similar movements arouse in Great Britain:

"The great campaign against Isolationism in America which is being sponsored by the Methodist Churches and many other denominations is a phenomenon of the first importance.

"This is not a merely political issue. It concerns the future of mankind, and that concerns the Churches. This war is a crusade against an evil thing. So, indeed, was the last war, but the fact was then not so plain. Had it been plain enough there might have been no need for renewing the fighting, no need for more deaths and bereavements.

"It would be of no avail to repine over that. We are now faced with a few simple considerations, one of the most important of which has obviously been grasped by the American Churches. The American people cannot stand aside, congratulating themselves on their own peace and security, while the forces of evil strive to establish dominion over all the rest of the world.

"These forces take now a particular shape which we call Nazism. This shape is very distinct, very easily recognisable for what it is. The doctrine of the *Herrenvolk* is the sheer negation of Christianity. Anyone, white, black, brown or betwixt and between, can become a Christian if he accepts the teachings of Our Lord with an open and honest heart. But the individual's position as a member of the *Herrenvolk* or an outsider is determined before his birth by factors over which he has no control.

"Here in this extreme racialism is seen, naked and unashamed, a plague which has afflicted mankind from its beginnings. We have a hope of getting rid of it. But it is only Christianity which gives us that hope, and it will be no hope at all unless the Christian communities all over the world march together.

"In hoc signo vinces—'By this sign thou shalt conquer.' That was the message which Constantine read in the sky. It is written there plainly for us to read. The American Churches are testifying to their belief in the oneness of man, to their belief that they cannot disinterest themselves in their neighbours anywhere.

"Here, too, we can dedicate ourselves in the same way to the same purpose. We share the same religious feelings, the same forms of worship, with the Americans. And we and they must dedicate ourselves not only with a present fervour but also with a determination that will outlast the war and help us to achieve that state of things which is the aim of religion on earth—brotherhood and charity."

NEWS FROM DENMARK

The birthday of the King of Denmark was celebrated on Sunday, September 26th, Thanksgiving Services being held in many churches. Clergy from all over the country telegraphed greetings from their parishes.

We learn that two days before the introduction of martial law in Denmark, the Bishop of Copenhagen, Fuglsang-Damgaard, issued the following pastoral letter to be read in the Copenhagen churches:

"Profound darkness has fallen upon our people. We do not see the road ahead, not even the next step. We feel as if our most precious possessions have been taken from us and given away. However, God also is with us in our darkness. Trusting Him we continue our normal duties. In speech and writing we will continue in the best possible way to maintain quiet and order. We will contribute to counteract the hatred which poisons the soul of our people, but will not yield an inch from the faith of the Church and will not yield an inch from the truth, from right and justice.

"We will remain loyal to our Church, King and Fatherland. Let us pray for all who have sacrificed their lives for us, for the wounded and for all those in mourning, for all who have lost their freedom, for our beloved King, our Church and people."

FRENCH ROMAN CATHOLIC DIGNITARIES AND THE WAR

The view has often been expressed that whereas the lower clergy of the French

Roman Catholic Church are strongly opposed to Vichy, the higher clergy are inclined to collaborate. The following letter addressed to a French prelate in a Nazi-controlled paper shows that the Nazi authorities do not share this view.

"After my audacity in writing to Your Grace on May 20th and October 7th, 1942, I apologise for once again troubling your pious meditations. My confusion is extreme when I think how your cares have become, each day, more and more acute. The renewal of the massacres which are perpetrated in your diocese—as, alas, all over France—by British and American airmen must fill the gentle pastor that you are with horror. And your prayers, more ardent than ever, ascend towards Our Father in Heaven, so that He may give us each day our daily bread, in spite of the crimes of enemy agents who burn our crops.

"I am not unaware that certain high ecclesiastical authorities are suspicious of certain forms of European government. However legitimate this unfavourable prejudice may appear, it seems to me that they should fade away before the fact that these governments, or more exactly their armies, are to-day the only rampart capable of preventing the collapse of the Church, the massacre of her priests and the disappearance—for centuries—of the idea of God. Therefore I fail to understand the reason for the tendencies manifested in some clerical circles in face of events which are convulsing the world. I cannot understand how the Church, threatened with death, can continue to hesitate to form a compact and solid bloc against Bolshevism.

"It seems to me that the Anglo-Saxon attacks are simply in response to an appeal by the seventh international congress of the Godless, held in Moscow, and presided over by the Jew Gubelmann, otherwise Jaroslawsky.

"Your Grace will certainly deplore, as I do, that not a single great Catholic voice has made itself heard in France, calling upon the faithful, as in the time of the early Crusades, to join in a ninth crusade between the Black Sea and the White Sea; but surely you pray for the enlightenment of foolish souls who are allowing themselves to become morally and materially the accomplices of the unfaithful. This hope brings a little comfort to the Christian who herewith begs Your Grace to accept the homage of his profound respect."